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Except for this road, there are only single file tracks leading from village to village or to the taro gardens. Behind the villages there stretches for interminable miles the almost impenetrable tangle of large trees, small trees, shrubs, and rank undergrowth, well garnished with thorny creepers and hanging vines, which is characteristic of a tropical forest. Apart from the clearings made by the natives for planting, the only breaks in the maze of 'bush' are caused by treeless patches covered with imperata grass, often growing to a height of 3 or 4 feet. It is quite impossible to make any use of these patches as the grass overpowers everything. Even on the plantations no method has been found of eradicating it permanently. The natives burn it occasionally, but they know from experience that it is no use trying to grow anything in its place.

CLIMATE

I was not equipped for collecting meteorological data, but I made detailed notes in my diary every day as to the weather, and took readings from a thermometer (hung in the shade on my verandah) at fixed times as regularly as circumstances permitted. The result of these observations is shown in the diagrams. It will be noted that the range of variation as between the coldest and the hottest part of the day is much greater than that between the means for different months. This indicates that there is no marked change in the seasons, no period when growth is in a state of quiescence, as it is in winter in England. The trees are never bare (except the kapiok, which is an importation), but a few leaves are always falling while at the same time fresh buds appear. Instead of autumn tints there is always a touch of red or yellow in the breadfruit trees where some enormous leaf is ready to fall, making a patch of vivid colour in the midst of a mass of green. It follows that the people continue their daily round of hunting, fishing, cultivation of gardens, house- and canoe-building in much the same manner throughout the little-changing year, having no such well-marked cycle of activities as characterizes the lives of those living in countries with pronounced seasonal differences.

As can be deduced from their situation, the Solomon Islands have a tropical climate with a heavy rainfall. The rain usually comes in sharp bursts, often in the afternoon after a bright morning, and clears away rapidly. There may be several days with only a slight shower or two, but after such a period will come a

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137 many other shrubs, a large variety of ferns and mosses, and in-
[262] numerable fungi, some of which are eaten. Creepers and epiphytes of all kinds abound, but there are fewer orchids than are reported from other islands: a small white variety is the most common. The abundance of rattan and other thorny plants makes progress
● [487] through uncut bush a slow and sometimes painful business, and as a path that is little used very soon becomes overgrown, no one ever goes any distance into the bush without a knife.

The bush is disappointing in its lack of colour. It is all too green. Not only are the flowers few and far between—partly owing
[30] to the fact that a native will never pass a flowering shrub without taking his toll of its blossoms to put in his hair—but the birds and
136 the butterflies also are less brilliant than I had expected. There are some bright red and blue parrots, and the cockatoos, dazzlingly white in the sunshine, are conspicuous amid the foliage, but otherwise the birds are not striking, except the hornbill, with his extraordinary yellow beak and the whirr of his wings, which is one of the most characteristic sounds of the forest. There are several varieties of pigeon, called in imitation of its plaintive note, *kūrō*, and numbers of small birds, of which the most noticeable is a species of wagtail. Butterflies, though very large, are mostly black or brown, flecked or striped with white, but there is also a very beautiful black one with small iridescent bluish-green patches on its smaller wings.

The bush abounds with life, but nearly all the creatures are of small size. The largest animal is the wild pig, which if you meet it is usually far more frightened than ferocious, unless it is wounded, or has young. The cuscus opossum, or phalanger, which lives in the holes of hollow trees, attains to about the size of a large cat. Flying foxes in great numbers keep up their short sharp bark nearly all night, and what with them and the frogs, and some insect of the grasshopper tribe (called by the natives *nen-nen*, because its note sounds like these syllables repeated in a high-pitched voice), the bush is never silent except perhaps for an hour or so before dawn. Iguanas and all kinds of small lizards are plentiful, and there are also snakes, whether poisonous or not I
[825] cannot say. The natives are afraid of them, and kill them on sight, if possible, by beating them with a stick. The large coco-nut-eating land-crab (from Guppy's description I take this to be *Birgus latro*) is an odd sight. These natives do not eat it, as do others elsewhere,

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places, carrying spears, bows and arrows, knives, and trade axes, which they call tomahawks. Those who were not fortunate enough to possess these treasures carried sticks cut from the bush, with leaves still attached to them. Their faces were painted in various patterns, a striking effect being obtained by a bright red (carmine) obtained from the Chinese stores, covering both ears. Nearly every one had a spot of red (*oin*) on both temples; this is a protection against the dangers of the road.

We went on till we came to a village called Kinopawpaw. On its outskirts we found a platform made of boughs, on which were placed a large number of coco-nut-leaf baskets. These were full of roast pig, cooked taro, and ceremonial pudding. Others contained the eggs of the bush fowl (megapode), done up in leaves. Huge bunches of areca-nut, yellow and green, hung from the posts of the platform, together with bundles of betel-pepper leaves. All along the edge of the platform there were coco-nuts. The whole effect was one of lavish abundance, as was intended. This food was provided by the group holding the ceremony, for the benefit of those who came from long distances to attend it.

Our crowd approached the platform with much shouting and brandishing of weapons. They were met by a band who had arrived before us, and a sham fight took place. Then we all sat down and food was distributed. Presently a fresh crowd arrived, every one jumped up and rushed out to meet them, and another sham fight took place. This happened whenever a new contingent came up.

We remained there till darkness had fallen; fresh contingents arrived at frequent intervals, each necessitating the staging of another fight. Finally we started off down a narrow track, in single file, our way lighted by torches made of the dried leaves of the coco-nut palm, and the hurricane lanterns carried by our own party, a less picturesque but more dependable form of illumination. The track was level for a while, then it began to go up and down, with creeks in the valleys, some bridged by logs, some to be forded. Progress was at the rate of about two miles an hour, or less, with frequent halts. Presently we came to an avenue of areca-nut palms. These trees the men in the forefront of the procession proceeded to cut down and strew over the road, though some of them were bearing. It seemed a piece of wanton destruction, but as the owners of the trees were among the destroyers, it was clearly part of the business. They did not gather the areca-nuts from the

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trees they felled, nor pick up those that lay scattered thickly on the ground. Leaving behind us a desolate scene of wreckage, we went on farther and skirted the village of Tchinopai. From now onwards we climbed steeply, dropping into deep valleys between ridges. As we stood, during one of the many pauses, on a downward gradient, we could see the lights of the men in front of us going down into the depths, and those of the head of the procession climbing skywards in the far distance. There must have been between two and three hundred in single file, with torches at intervals, their flicker making the forest into a mysterious place full of weird shadows. It is not difficult to understand the general dread of the forest after nightfall.

When we had almost made up our minds that we were to walk all night, we came to the village of Nimbarossi. On the verandah of a house by the road was laid out another store of provisions, which were promptly distributed. The crowd then disposed itself for what remained of the night, some inside the house, some on the verandah, and a great many on the ground outside.

Every one was up at dawn next morning, and the long line continued to wind up hill and down dale, crossing rivers—fortunately plentifully supplied with boulders—at intervals. The line was constantly broken by men dashing into the bush to get some sweet-smelling or bright-coloured plant, which they stuck into their hair and armbands, or their belts, if they were lucky enough to possess that much-coveted article.

Presently the whole line halted and collected in a clearing, spreading wild banana leaves to sit upon. A native never sits on the bare ground if he can help it. The boys who were wearing *upi* made elaborate covers for them with leaves, because it would not do for the novices to see them before they had received their own. The older men rubbed lime over their faces. One man produced a tin of talcum powder, which was passed round, its contents being daubed on foreheads and cheeks. Another was the envied possessor of a pot of brilliantine, which he daubed under his armpits with evident pleasure. They hung a wreath of aromatic plants round my neck, which I appreciated as evidence that they did not resent my presence. Presently the sound of a bull-roarer was heard in the distance. I was told that this was the voice of the *urar*, and that we should presently see them. Before moving on, each man carefully whipped with the large leaves of the wild banana the

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place where he had been sitting, and hid the leaves in the bush. This was done to guard against the possibility of any one making bad magic against them at that place.

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Very soon we came to a broad track newly cleared, or rather hacked out, for fallen trees, banana bushes, and creepers still covered it, making progress difficult. This destruction is supposed to be the work of the *urar*, and is intended to impress the women, who will presently pass that way, with their tremendous power. This proved also to be the explanation of the destruction of the areca-palms the night before. We climbed over or pushed our way through the tangle for a short distance, and then came to a broader clearing, where some large trees had been cut down. There we found a third platform laden with food. Before it was divided a sham fight took place, with much shouting and stamping and clashing of weapons.

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From this place onwards the trail had not been cut, so some of the men went in front to clear it. They certainly did a thorough job, strewing trees and bush-tangle over a track about ten feet wide. The young men in front carried a long piece of rattan. When they came to a tree, they tied one end round the trunk, put considerable man-power on the other end, and tugged at the rattan line until the tree fell. If it offered too much resistance, they hacked at its trunk with axes, but most of the trees were soft-timbered, so it was not such a laborious undertaking as it looked. As each tree fell, its branches were lopped sufficiently to allow the crowd coming behind to scramble over it, then the vanguard went on to the next tree, slashing down all the bush tangle in their way. The result was certainly calculated to impress the uninitiated with the power of the *urar* supposed to be responsible for all this destruction.

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Presently we came to a large clearing, also freshly cut. Here a man standing on a fallen tree trunk was swinging a bull-roarer. He had another in his left hand, slightly smaller; this he used alternately with the first.

As we went on we were shown stones lodged high up in the forks of trees, said to be thrown there by the *urar*, and, in two places, big holes in the ground about six feet apart, his footprints. These were to be duly pointed out to the women when they passed that way at a later stage in the proceedings.

Finally, we crossed a river for the third time. On the bank a halt was called while the long piece of rattan that had been used

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881 in pulling down the trees was cut up into small bits and thrown
574 into the stream. The men were particularly careful not to let any
487 of the pieces get lodged behind boulders, but pushed them all out so that they were carried downstream, in order to obliterate all signs of human agency in the destruction along the way.

881 After crossing the river we went up a steep hill to a large clearing
574 near the top. This place was called Kuruwiowan, and had been cleared especially for this ceremony. When another group wishes to hold a similar ceremony, another site must be selected and cleared. The place was well chosen. The ground still sloped upward slightly, and also fell away on one side, leading to a steep hill going down to a narrow valley through which a small stream was running, with another steep rise on the further side. A few trees were left standing in the main clearing, and a trail was cut down one of the hill-sides. Round the edge of the main clearing were smaller ones with rough shelters of poles and banana leaves; inside some of these there were men munching taro.

The crowd that came with us rushed up the hill shouting and brandishing their weapons; turned and rushed down again; divided into two halves which charged each other. Some men appeared carrying joints of roast pig, baskets of taro, and coconuts. They took the food up the hill and put it into a shed at the top, where a crowd of visitors promptly fell upon it. Presently there was more shouting and wild charging. A band of men from Kunua had arrived and were being welcomed in the prescribed manner. Another band, from Raua, came behind them, only to find that the first comers had eaten all the food. For a moment it looked as though the mock fight was going to become a
881 real one. This is not uncommon. I learned from Pinari later that
574 in the olden days, if the amount of food provided was insuffi-
579 cient, the guests retaliated by killing the hosts, including the
177 women and children, burning their houses, cutting down their coco-nut trees, and spearing their pigs. Nowadays, since the fear of the District Officer is upon them, they mostly content themselves with growling and cutting down coco-nut trees. Up in the hills, however, they are less amenable to discipline than on the coast, and if the mob now assembled had really got
881 angry there might have been trouble. But being promised that
574 more food should be forthcoming, the new-comers joined the others in the sham combats that took place at short intervals, as

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pirpo	lower of two cross-pieces at ends of hut, and across at each house-post. Any kind of wood may be used for these.
tokoman	upper of two cross-pieces at ends and at house-posts.
a tō	sago palm whose leaves are used for thatch. Thatch also called *a tō*.
nin	outer bark of stem of plant of that name used to tie sheets of thatch to the *walwal*.
gerom or *girum*	mid-rib of sago-palm leaf, used to fix leaves together in lengths to make thatch.
tʃir a tō	to prepare the sago-palm leaves by taking out the mid-rib.
kisib	to make the holes for fixing the leaves together.
tʃiku a tō	to fix the leaves together into lengths ready to put on.

The men's house.

The men's house (*tobár*) is made in exactly the same way as the ordinary huts of the village; the size varies according to the number of people who are likely to use it. Besides serving as the sleeping apartment for the boys wearing the *upi*, the *tobár* is the men's club; its front verandah is seldom without a group of men sitting or standing round talking and chewing the betel mixture. To it male guests from other villages are taken on their arrival, each to the *tobár* of the clan to which he belongs.

The *tobár*, two or more, as the case may be, are sometimes placed just outside the main line of huts, from which they may be screened by a hedge of trees or a bit of uncut bush. But often they are placed in the centre of the village, abutting on, or actually in the precincts of, the central space where dances are held. The three *tobár* of the original village of Kurtatchi were a little to one side of the village, and had special paths leading from them to the shore, which might not be used by women, who avoided their vicinity altogether. The two which were constructed after the moving of the village of Gomen to join that of Kurtatchi, were built at one end of the central space, between the two lines of huts added by the Gomen people. The hut of a man who had died was taken down to make room for them, the boys who had shared it with him being afraid to go on living there. Even in that prominent position, the *tobár* were strictly avoided by the women, who always made their way round by the back of the lines of huts.

Ceremony on completion of tobár. The completion of a new *tobár* is signalized by a feast involving the killing of several pigs,